



Opening speech by HE Deputy Chairperson

On Africa Lifestyle Day

Courtesies

Dear Participants, Ladies and gentlemen,

A **healthy lifestyle** involves regular physical activity or exercise, healthy eating habits, reducing stress, avoiding tobacco use and alcohol abuse. Adopting a healthy lifestyle reduces the risk of Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs) like High blood pressure (Hypertension), overweight/obesity, high blood glucose levels (Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus), high levels of fat in the blood (Hyperlipidemia), various cancers, chronic respiratory diseases and injuries.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has projected that by 2020, 73% of all deaths worldwide will be due to NCDs and that the burden of disease due to NCDs will rise by more than 60% in LMICs (including countries in Sub Saharan Africa).

The Theme for this year's commemoration is 'Tobacco- free environment starts with you'

This theme is relevant and in line with the Sixty-sixth World Health Assembly's fifth global target of reducing the prevalence of current tobacco use by 30% by the year 2025 and the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). The theme has been selected because of the vital role tobacco use plays in

causing, aggravating or increasing the risk of developing several NCDs thereby affecting the health of millions of Africans. It recognises that all people have a right to breathe clean air and stresses the fact that each of us has a responsibility in ensuring that our environment is tobacco-free.

Tobacco use is one of the leading causes of preventable deaths in the world. About six million people are currently estimated to die annually from tobacco use, with over 600 000 deaths due to exposure to second-hand smoke (170 000 of these deaths occur among children). Unless something substantial is done, this annual total is projected to increase to 8 million by 2030. In Africa, tobacco-attributable mortality is currently around 3%. For an avoidable cause of death, these figures are unacceptably high.

The African Union Commission, now more than ever is committed to a “tobacco-free Africa”. The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) was created with this in mind. The commitment was started in 1999 and intensified in the following years, leading to a unified voice in Africa committing to tobacco control and improved public health.

Every effort should be made to ensure that people that use tobacco are assisted to stop, new smokers are prevented from starting, exposure to second hand tobacco smoke is prevented and the production and sale of tobacco products is reduced.

This is the time for action. Africa must show leadership in ensuring that the present tide is reversed and that the next generation will suffer less from the harmful effects of tobacco.

I wish you and all of Africa a happy 2015 Africa Healthy Lifestyle Day commemoration.

I thank you.